



Fact Sheet 19 - Application Assessment Process

	Valid from	Valid to	Main changes
Version 3	13.04.16	...	Consolidated and simplified some assessment criteria
Version 2	20.10.15	13.04.16	Change to assessment categories. Changed reference to Preparatory Costs
Version 1	27.04.15	20.10.15	

Core message: All applications are assessed by the Joint Secretariat according to a set of standard procedures and criteria. The Programme's Steering Committee then decides whether each project should receive funding. This Fact Sheet explains how your application will be assessed.

Background

In most cases there is a 2-step application procedure. Projects first submit an Expression of Interest and only projects which are approved at this stage are asked to submit a Full Application.

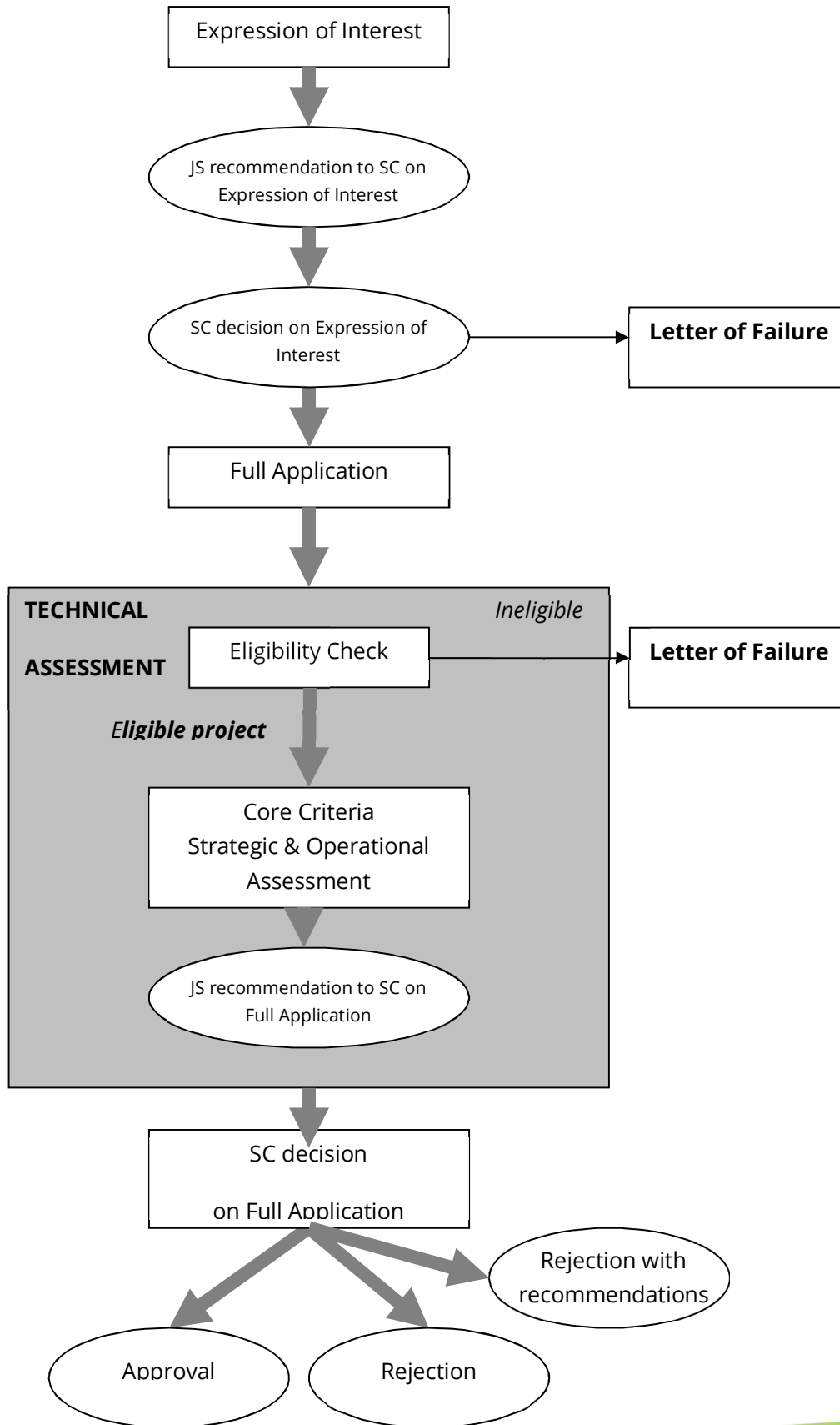
All Expressions of Interest (EOIs) and Full Applications submitted by the close of a Call for Proposals are assessed following a standard procedure. The Joint Secretariat carries out the assessment using standard eligibility and assessment checklists. This results in a recommendation, which is presented to the programme's Steering Committee. This committee makes the final decision on whether a project should be supported or not.

If minor information is missing when an application is submitted, the JS will indicate this and request follow-up. However, if the application is incomplete or lacks major supporting documentation, it will not be assessed.

The assessment procedure for the Full Application is split into two parts, the Eligibility Check and the Strategic & Operational assessment. Only projects that have passed the eligibility check are given a full assessment and considered by the Steering Committee for approval or rejection. All complete applications are assessed.

The Lead Beneficiaries of all projects considered by the Steering Committee will be informed of the committee's decision as soon as possible following the meeting.

The full process is illustrated below.





Guidance – Expressions of Interest (Step 1)

The aim of the Expression of Interest is:

- To provide a relatively easy way for inexperienced partners and/or very innovative ideas to approach the programme and get a realistic assessment of whether funding is likely to be granted.
- To allow the partner countries in the programme to make requests for modifications or additions to project ideas and thereby reduce the number of rejections or conditional approvals of Full Applications.

The Expression of Interest is a short application focusing on content issues. All Expressions of Interest receive a formal assessment by the Joint Secretariat. They are assessed using a subset of the full programme assessment criteria (see Assessment Criteria at end of document). For each of the six categories, the Expression of Interest is assessed as Strong, Sufficient, Weak or Insufficient. No Expression of Interest will receive a recommendation to move on to a Full Application if it is assessed as Insufficient in any category. The 6 categories used are:

- Project Context
- Cooperation Character
- Project's contribution to programme objectives, results and outputs
- Partnership Relevance
- Investments (if relevant)
- Budget

Expressions of Interest which are approved by the Steering Committee will have to develop a Full Application for decision at one of the following two meetings (this will need to be submitted approximately 3 or 9 months after the decision on the Expression of Interest). Rejected Expressions of Interest will receive a letter explaining the main reasons for rejection. It is possible to re-apply with a new Expression of Interest.

Guidance – Full Application (Step 2)

The Technical Assessment is made up of 2 parts: The Eligibility Check and the Strategic & Operational Assessment.

- The Eligibility Check ensures that the submitted application complies with all basic programme rules and relevant European regulations. It assesses whether it is possible for the programme to fund the application.
- The Strategic Assessment criteria determine the extent of the project's contribution to programme objectives and results by addressing joint or common target group needs.
- The Operational Assessment criteria assess the viability and feasibility of the proposed project, as well as its value for money.



If the project fails the Eligibility Check, the Lead Beneficiary will receive a letter explaining why the application is ineligible. Lead Beneficiaries of eligible applications will be informed about the outcome of the Eligibility Check. At the same time, a copy of the application is sent to the national authorities in the Lead Beneficiary country so that they can check that the project is not against national policy.

Every project is given a qualitative assessment, which focuses on assessing every application according to its individual merits. Each part of the assessment links to a specific part of the application so that both assessors and reviewers know exactly which parts of the application to read in order to carry out the assessment (see Assessment Criteria at end of document).

The possible result for each part of the assessment is:

- Strong – the application addresses the criterion well, although it is possible that some small improvements could be made. The answer gives clear information on all important areas.
- Sufficient – the application broadly addresses the criterion, but there are areas which could be strengthened. There are several areas where detail could be improved or the information is unclear.
- Weak – the application is missing important details or only fulfils the criterion to a minimum level. The issue is not sufficient to reject the application by itself but there is clear room for improvement.
- Insufficient – the application fails to address the criterion adequately and/or the information provided is not in line with programme requirements. The answer does not correctly address the question asked.

If a project is assessed as being Insufficient on one of the Strategic or Operational assessment questions, the project is recommended for rejection. An assessment over 'Insufficient' in all categories does not guarantee a recommendation for approval as the final recommendation will take an overall view of the project and its fit in the programme at the time of application – especially if there are many weak areas. It is important to note that the JS makes recommendations and that it is the Steering Committee which makes the decisions. The Guidance for each Call for Proposals will set out any issues of particular importance for the call in question.

Preparation Costs

All approved full applications will receive a lump sum payment for preparation costs provided that they have requested this in the application form (see Fact Sheet 7).



Expression of Interest – Detailed Checklist

Quality Assessment

Scoring applications

The assessment grades are outlined below.

- Strong – the Expression of Interest addresses the criterion well, although it is possible that some small improvements could be made. The answer gives clear information on all important areas.
- Sufficient – the Expression of Interest broadly addresses the criterion, but there are areas which could be strengthened. There are several areas where detail could be improved or the information is unclear.
- Weak – the application is missing important details or only fulfils the criterion to a minimum level. The issue is not sufficient to reject the application by itself but there is clear room for improvement.
- Insufficient – the Expression of Interest fails to address the criterion adequately and or/ the information provided is not in line with Programme rules/regulations. The answer does not correctly address the question asked.

If a project is assessed as being Insufficient on one of categories below, it will be automatically recommended for rejection.



Assessment questions	Assessment will be based primarily on the responses to the following questions. To what extent does the Expression of Interest...?	Strong, sufficient, weak, insufficient
<p>Project's context</p> <p><i>Is a need for the project justified?</i></p>	<p><i>Address common territorial challenges of the programme or a joint asset of the programme area? – Is there a real demand for the project?</i></p> <p><i>Make use of available knowledge and builds on existing results and practices?</i></p>	
<p>Cooperation character</p> <p><i>What potential added value does the cooperation bring?</i></p>	<p><i>Demonstrate the importance of the transnational approach to the topic addressed?</i></p> <p><i>Demonstrate new solutions that go beyond the existing practice or adapts and implements already developed solutions?</i></p> <p><i>Idea has a potential to fulfil at least 3 cooperation: joint development (mandatory), joint implementation (mandatory), and joint financing or joint staffing?</i></p>	



Assessment questions	Assessment will be based primarily on the responses to the following questions. To what extent does the Expression of Interest...?	Strong, sufficient, weak, insufficient
<p>Project's contribution to programme's objectives, expected results and outputs</p> <p><i>Will the project potentially contribute to the achievement of programme's objectives?</i></p>	<p><i>Demonstrate results which are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>in accordance with the selected target groups needs?</i> - <i>specific, realistic, durable, transferable?</i> 	
<p>Partnership relevance</p> <p><i>Is the partnership composition relevant for the proposed project?</i></p>	<p><i>Demonstrate that all partners play a defined role in the partnership and get a real benefit from it?</i></p>	



Assessment questions	Assessment will be based primarily on the responses to the following questions. To what extent does the Expression of Interest...?	Strong, sufficient, weak, insufficient
<p>Investments</p> <p><i>To what extent are the proposed investments realistic?</i></p>	<p><i>Demonstrate the added value of investments and equipment purchases and their trans-national relevance?</i></p>	
<p>Budget</p> <p><i>To what extent does the project budget demonstrate value for money?</i></p>	<p><i>Demonstrate a budget which appears proportionate to the main results aimed for?</i></p>	



Full Application – Detailed Checklist

Quality assessment is divided into two categories:

1. Strategic assessment - The main aim is to determine the extent of the project's contribution to the achievement of programme objectives (contribution to programme results), by addressing joint or common target group needs.
2. Operational assessment - The main aim is to assess the viability and the feasibility of the proposed project, as well as its value for money in terms of resources

Scoring applications

The scoring mechanism is outlined below.

- Strong – the Application addresses the criterion well, although it is possible that some small improvements could be made. The answer gives clear information on all important areas.
- Sufficient – the Application broadly addresses the criterion, but there are areas which could be strengthened. There are several areas where detail could be improved or the information is unclear.
- Weak – the Application is missing important details or only fulfils the criterion to a minimum level. The issue is not sufficient to reject the application itself but there is clear room for improvement
- Insufficient – the Application fails to address the criterion adequately and or/ the information provided is not in line with Programme rules/regulations. The answer does not correctly address the question asked.

If an Application is assessed as being Insufficient on one of the Strategic or Operational assessment categories, it will be automatically recommended for Rejection.



Project Summary (Auto-fill from Application A.2)

1. Strategic assessment criteria

Assessment questions	Assessment is based primarily on responses to the following questions. To what extent does the project application....?	Strong, Sufficient, Weak, Insufficient	Ref. AF
<p>Project's context (relevance and strategy)</p> <p><i>How well is a need for the project justified?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Address common territorial challenges of the programme or a joint asset of the programme area – is there a real demand for the project?</i> ▪ <i>Clearly contribute to a wider strategy on one or more policy levels (EU / national / regional)?</i> ▪ <i>Make use of available knowledge and builds on existing results and practices?</i> ▪ <i>Make a positive contribution to the programme horizontal principles: equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women, sustainable development?</i> 		<p>C.1.1</p> <p>C.3.1</p> <p>C.3.2</p> <p>C.3.3</p> <p>C.4</p>
<p>Cooperation character</p> <p><i>What added value does the</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Clearly demonstrate the importance of a trans-national approach to the topic addressed?</i> - the results cannot (or only to some extent) be achieved without cooperation and/or the cooperation has a significant added value for the 		<p>B.1</p> <p>C.1.3</p>



Assessment questions	Assessment is based primarily on responses to the following questions. To what extent does the project application....?	Strong, Sufficient, Weak, Insufficient	Ref. AF
<i>cooperation bring?</i>	partners - there is a clear benefit from cooperating for the project partners / target groups / project area / programme area		
	• <i>Demonstrate new solutions that go beyond the existing practice in the sector/programme area/participating countries or adapts and implements already developed solutions?</i>		C.1.2
	• <i>Fulfil the 3 cooperation criteria?: joint development (mandatory), joint implementation (mandatory), and joint staffing or financing</i>		C.5
Project's contribution to programme's objectives, expected results and outputs	<i>Indicate a project intervention which demonstrates a logical flow? With the following sub-questions.</i> 1. To what extent do the project's detailed objectives link to the project's overall		C.2.2 C.2.3



Assessment questions	Assessment is based primarily on responses to the following questions. To what extent does the project application....?	Strong, Sufficient, Weak, Insufficient	Ref. AF
<p><i>To what extent will the project contribute to the achievement of programme's objectives?</i></p>	<p>objective?</p> <p>2. To what extent do the project's overall objectives clear links to one of the programme specific objectives?</p> <p>3. To what extent do the main project deliverables link to project output indicators?</p> <p>4. To what extent do the project outputs link to the project results?</p> <p>5. To what extent are project results specific and quantified? And do they clearly link to the programme result indicator?</p>		
	<p>• <i>Indicate Results and main output that are in accordance with the selected target groups needs?</i></p>		C.2.2, C.2.3
	<p>- <i>Indicate results that are specific?</i></p>		C.2.3
	<p>- <i>Indicate results that are realistic (is it possible to achieve them with given</i></p>		C.2.3,



Assessment questions	Assessment is based primarily on responses to the following questions. To what extent does the project application....?	Strong, Sufficient, Weak, Insufficient	Ref. AF
	<i>resources – i.e. time, partners, budget - and they are realistic based on the quantification provided)?</i>		C.5, D.1
	• <i>Identify main outputs that are durable?(the proposal is expected to provide a significant and durable contribution to solving the challenges targeted) – if not, it is justified? (Compulsory Output Indicator 1)</i>		C.5 C.2.2
	• <i>Identify main outputs that are applicable and replicable by other organisations/regions/countries outside of the current partnership (transferability) ?– If not, it is justified? (Compulsory Output Indicator 1)</i>		C.5 C.2.2
Partnership relevance <i>To what extent is the partnership composition relevant for the proposed project?</i>	• <i>Involve the relevant actors needed to address the territorial challenge/joint asset and the objectives specified?</i>		B D.4
	• <i>Are there any beneficiaries or activities outside the programme area? If yes, are they justified and relevant for project implementation?</i>		
	• <i>Demonstrate a project partnership that:</i> - is balanced with respect to the levels, sectors, territory - consists of partners that complement each other		B, C.5
	• <i>Demonstrate partner organisations have proven experience and competence in the thematic field concerned, as well as the necessary capacity to implement the project (financial, human resources, etc.) ?</i>		B, C.5
	• <i>Demonstrate a partnership where all partners play a defined role in the partnership</i>		B, C.5



Assessment questions	Assessment is based primarily on responses to the following questions. To what extent does the project application....?	Strong, Sufficient, Weak, Insufficient	Ref. AF
	<i>and get a real benefit from it?</i>		



2. Operational assessment criteria

Assessment questions	Assessment is based primarily on responses to the following questions. To what extent does the project application....?	Strong, Sufficient, Weak Insufficient	Sections in AF
<p>Management</p> <p>To what extent are management structures and procedures in line with the project size, duration and needs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate management structures (e.g. project steering committee) which are proportionate to the project size and needs and allow partners' involvement in decision-making? • Demonstrate management procedures which are clear, transparent and effective? • Demonstrate project management which includes regular contact between project partners and ensures transfer of expertise across the partnership (internal communication within the partnership)? <p>Demonstrate that provisions for risk and quality management are in place?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a lead partner which demonstrates competency in managing EU co-financed projects or other international projects or can ensure adequate measures for management support? 		<p>C.5 WP 1</p> <p>B.1</p>
<p>Communication</p> <p>To what extent are communication activities appropriate and forceful to reach the relevant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have communication objectives which clearly link to the project specific objectives? • Demonstrate chosen approach/tactics which are appropriate to reach communication objectives? • Indicate communication activities and deliverables which are appropriate to reach the relevant target groups and stakeholders? 		<p>C.5 WP 2</p>



Assessment questions	Assessment is based primarily on responses to the following questions. To what extent does the project application....?	Strong, Sufficient, Weak Insufficient	Sections in AF
<i>target groups and stakeholders?</i>			
<p>Work plan</p> <p><i>To what extent is the work plan realistic, consistent and coherent?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Propose activities and deliverables which are relevant and lead to the planned main outputs and results?</i> • <i>Distribute tasks among partners which are appropriate? (e.g. sharing of tasks is clear, logical, in line with partners' role in the project, etc.)</i> • <i>Demonstrate a realistic time plan? (contingency included)</i> • <i>Demonstrate a work plan where activities, deliverables and outputs are in a logical time-sequence?</i> 		<p>C.5 C.6</p>
<p>Budget</p> <p><i>To what extent does the project budget</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Demonstrate that sufficient and reasonable resources are planned to ensure project implementation?</i> • <i>Demonstrate a budget which appears to be proportionate to the proposed work plan and the main outputs and results aimed for?</i> 		<p>C.7 C.9 B.1, C.5, C.8, C.9, PART D</p>



Assessment questions	Assessment is based primarily on responses to the following questions. To what extent does the project application....?	Strong, Sufficient, Weak Insufficient	Sections in AF
<i>demonstrate value for money?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total partner budgets reflect real partners' involvement (are balanced and realistic)? • If there is expenditure for beneficiaries or activities outside the programme area is it within 20% of the total project budget? 		
<i>To what extent is the budget coherent and proportionate?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justify the need for engaging external expertise in relation to proposed activities? Are proposed services and contracts eligible? • Demonstrate a justified need for equipment purchases? • Demonstrate a justified need for material investments? • Include a clear and realistic level of Shared Costs? <p><i>Does the project indicate Revenue generation? If yes, for what and how much?</i></p>		B.1, C.5, C.7, C.8, C.9, PART D
<i>State Aid Check</i>	<p><i>Is it likely that this project includes state aid?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Will the project develop goods or services on a market?</i> 2) <i>Are there similar goods/ services already on the market?</i> 3) <i>Will the project confer a competitive advantage (economic or otherwise) to one or several beneficiaries?</i> <p><i>Conclusion: Is it likely there is state aid? Y/N</i></p>		



Assessment questions	Assessment is based primarily on responses to the following questions. To what extent does the project application....?	Strong, Sufficient, Weak Insufficient	Sections in AF
	<p><i>If there is a serious risk of State Aid:</i></p> <p>4) <i>Has one or more beneficiary in the project made use of the De Minimis option?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. Have all Self-Declaration(s) been received along with the application?</i> <i>b. Are all funding thresholds respected?</i> <i>c. Are all criteria met?</i> <p>5) <i>Has one or more beneficiaries in the project made use of the GBER option?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. Do the beneficiary(ies) fulfill all criteria for participating under the GBER?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>i. Are all of the beneficiaries concerned SMEs?</i> <i>ii. Are all funding thresholds respected (especially valid in the case of transport beneficiaries)?</i> 		